

Appendix A

Required Report Elements and Compliance

California Wildlife: Conservation Challenges, California's Wildlife Action Plan, addresses the eight required elements and subelements (as described in the NAAT Review Reference Guide) either in the plan document or its affiliated Web publications. The eight required elements are listed below with a description of where and how the elements are addressed.

1. Information on the distribution and abundance of species of wildlife, including low and declining populations, that is indicative of the diversity and health of the state's wildlife as the state fish and wildlife agency deems appropriate.

This element is addressed in Chapter 2, in the Species at Risk section of each regional chapter, and in the online Wildlife Species Matrix (http://www.dfg.ca.gov/habitats/wdp/matrix_search.asp).

The California Department of Fish and Game has a designated Special Animals List, also referred to as "species at risk" or "special status species." The Department uses this list to identify the species in greatest need of conservation. This list includes approximately 800 species, representing marine, aquatic, and terrestrial habitats, and includes birds, mammals, reptiles, amphibians, fish, and invertebrates. It focuses on threatened and endangered species and species of special concern, as well as species that are rare or declining in numbers. The Special Animals List is routinely updated, and species are added to list based on the criteria of state and federal wildlife and land management agencies. More information about this list is provided in Chapter 3 (Species at Risk) and Appendix D (Department of Fish and Game Species and Habitat Information Sources).

The Wildlife Action Plan team updated information for the nearly 800 special status species statewide on the Special Animals List. This task was accomplished by conducting literature searches for each species (including vertebrates and invertebrates), entering new-occurrence information from

journal articles, consulting species experts for opinions regarding the inclusion of additional rare or threatened species, and entering data from the California Natural Diversity Database backlog of field survey forms and reports. The Wildlife Action Plan team then developed the Wildlife Species Matrix that includes information about those 800 species.

The Wildlife Species Matrix lists the species at risk and provides the rarity ranking status, associated habitat, population trends, and range maps for each, where available. The range maps indicate the distribution of the species at risk. New or updated range maps were prepared for vertebrates. The California Department of Fish and Game will continue to update range maps as new information becomes available. To the extent data is available, abundance information is provided in the Natural Diversity Database and in Fish and Game's Threatened and Endangered Species and Species of Special Concern reports. These reports are routinely updated every few years. More information about these reports is provided in Appendix D (Department of Fish and Game Species and Habitat Information Sources).

The Species at Risk section in each regional chapter summarizes the numbers of species, endemic species, and species at risk that are associated with the region and included on the Special Animals List.

2. Descriptions of locations and relative condition of key habitats and community types essential to conservation of species at risk.

This element is addressed in the Stressors Affecting Wildlife and Habitats section of each regional chapter. The regional scale, such as a portion of a county or the bay-delta, is appropriate because it is the scale at which many of the stressors act and affect habitat condition, and it is the scale at which most resource agencies are organized for conservation management.

The Wildlife Action Plan team conducted regional scoping meetings and consulted regional experts to identify the major stressors affecting wildlife and habitats in each region. In the California Wildlife Action Plan, the key habitats and community types important for species at risk are discussed in the context of the major stressors affecting wildlife and habitats.

The California Department of Fish and Game has an ongoing program to collect habitat distribution and condition information for priority habitats and regions. The Vegetation Classification and Mapping Program conducts many of the habitat surveys and produces the habitat and condition maps for priority conservation regions or areas. (See the Vegetation Classification and Mapping Program on the Web at <http://www.dfg.ca.gov/bdb/html/vegcamp.html>.) The program is currently focused on western Riverside County (the area of a new NCCP), the Sierra Nevada western foothills (an area of significant biodiversity and great development pressures), and the San Francisco Bay Delta (an area with major water management concerns and essential habitats).

Detailed habitat information is typically compiled as part of major conservation planning efforts such as development of a Natural Community Conservation Plan (NCCP) or Fish and Game's high mountain lakes program. Habitat location and condition studies will continue as part of these kinds of large-scale regional conservation efforts.

Habitat location and condition information is also collected with species sighting records for the Natural Diversity Database. Additionally, available habitat location and condition information is imported into the California Wildlife Habitat Relationships System for use by biologists and conservation practitioners. (See http://www.dfg.ca.gov/bdb/html/wildlife_habitats.html.)

The key habitats and their condition and community types important for species at risk are discussed at the regional level in the context of the major stressors affecting wildlife and habitats. For example, riparian habitats and condition are addressed and the stressors affecting riparian habitats are discussed in several of the regional chapters. In addition, a workshop on conserving riparian habitats was held to discuss the condition and conservation of riparian habitats (workshop results are in Appendix F). Oak woodlands and aquatic habitats are other examples of key habitats, the conditions of which are addressed in the regional chapters.

Numerous ongoing efforts in California gather information on vegetation and habitat condition. The most detailed habitat condition analyses are done in conjunction with regional habitat conservation planning efforts. Among many other regional habitat analyses efforts, the following are examples of California projects or programs that have compiled detailed habitat information:

- Natural Community Conservation Programs in Southern California
- The San Francisco Bay Area Wetlands Ecosystem Habitat Goals Project
- The CalFed Ecosystem Restoration Program
- Fish and Game's High Mountain Lakes Surveys
- The North Coast Watershed Assessment Program
- Habitat Joint Ventures (there are five Joint Ventures in California)
- The Sierra Nevada Ecosystem Project (completed in 1996)

3. Descriptions of problems and threats that may adversely affect species at risk or their habitats, and priority research and survey work needed for restoration and conservation of these species and habitats.

Problems and threats affecting species are addressed in Chapter 3 (Threats to Wildlife Diversity) and in the Stressors Affecting Wildlife and Habitats section of each regional chapter. The stressors were identified through regional scoping meetings, regional expert consultations, review of wildlife and land conservation plans and documents, and regional peer reviews (see Appendix B for a description of the strategy development). There was little disagreement in workshops, among experts consulted, and in the literature regarding the threats and problems affecting wildlife.

The discussion of priority research and survey needs appears in Section 1 (Resource Assessment) of Chapter 6 (Strengthening California's Conservation Capabilities). Additional research and survey work are important priorities for nearly all aspects of wildlife and conservation efforts throughout the state. With regard to research and survey work, the California Department of Fish and Game chose to focus on wildlife and ecosystems monitoring and on the management of the data that contribute to resource assessment.

The California Department of Fish and Game established a new Resource Assessment Program (RAP) to coordinate and prioritize wildlife and ecosystem monitoring work. (See the RAP description on the Web at <http://www.dfg.ca.gov/habitats/RAP/default.html>.)

RAP efforts that have contributed to the development of the California Wildlife Action Plan include:

- Conducting an initial survey to identify resource assessment activities of public and private institutions throughout the state (see Appendix I).
- Sponsoring, in partnership with the UC Davis Wildlife Health Center, a workshop on monitoring and assessment priorities. The participants represented various state and federal agencies, universities, and conservation organizations. The workshop goals were: 1) Identify key resource assessment and monitoring priorities in California; 2) Identify top biological issues to address through monitoring; 3) Develop strategies for establishing and collaboratively implementing resource assessment priorities; and 4) Inform participants of the current resource assessment program efforts to increase opportunities for collaboration on future endeavors. (See the workshop results on the Web at <http://www.dfg.ca.gov/habitats/index.html>.)

4. Descriptions of conservation actions determined to be necessary to conserve the identified species and habitats, and priorities for implementing such actions.

This element is addressed in Chapter 4 (Statewide Conservation Actions) and the Conservation Actions to Restore and Conserve Wildlife section of each regional chapter.

Conservation actions are major efforts, often involving multiple agencies and partners. The conservation actions identify the most appropriate agencies or partners likely to take the lead in the implementation of the actions. The actions are described with enough detail to be clear but in broad enough terms to accommodate flexibility in how they may be implemented.

Developing more specific objectives and performance goals for conservation actions are appropriately done by the agencies and partners, whether statewide, regional, or local, that will be engaged in implementing the conservation actions. Environmental indicators and performance goals will be developed in the early implementation phase of the conservation actions.

Only priority actions are presented in the California Wildlife Action Plan.

Prioritization of conservation actions will continue as the California Plan and its recommended actions are discussed further with agencies and partners that are likely to be involved in implementation.

5. Descriptions of the proposed plans for monitoring species at risk and their habitats for monitoring the effectiveness of the conservation actions proposed in Element 4 and for adapting these conservation actions to respond appropriately to new information or changing conditions.

This element is addressed in Chapter 5 (Monitoring California's Conservation Actions).

Fish and Game and numerous federal, state, and local agencies and private organizations are engaged in various levels of monitoring of species and natural communities throughout the state. Fish and Game's Resource Assessment Program conducted a survey of the wildlife and ecosystem monitoring efforts throughout the state in order to build upon existing efforts and to improve the usefulness of monitoring results from various institutions.

Chapter 5 provides guidance for developing monitoring and adaptive management programs; it identifies existing monitoring efforts and provides a process for designing a monitoring program for

each conservation action. Specific monitoring is often best designed by those organizations engaged in implementing a conservation action.

It is not practical to monitor all species at risk and their habitats. It is important to strengthen the state's resource assessment capabilities so that it can better coordinate setting priorities for regional wildlife and habitat monitoring and design and implement efficient monitoring strategies.

Section 1 (Resource Assessment) of Chapter 6 (Strengthening California's Conservation Capabilities) discusses strengthening the state's capacity to monitor and assess habitats and ecosystems across the state.

The California Department of Fish and Game's resource assessment efforts will continue to identify priority regions, habitats, and species for field monitoring and direct resources toward those priorities. Emphasis is given to assessments of natural communities and assessments at a regional scale. For example, the Department has identified oak woodlands in the Sierra Nevada foothills as a high priority for resource assessment; oak woodlands are one of the most biodiverse natural communities, and this area is also experiencing significant development pressures. The results of these coordinated resource assessment efforts will reveal the effectiveness of one or more conservation actions in a given region.

Many of the conservation actions recommended in the California Wildlife Action Plan will be developed further through workshops and public processes. Implementation plans for those actions will include monitoring and adaptive management plans as needed. For example, the California Wildlife Action Plan recommends the completion and implementation of some regional conservation planning efforts, such as the West Mojave Plan. Plans for the monitoring of species and habitats and for monitoring the effectiveness of conservation actions, including procedures for adaptive management, are incorporated into such regional conservation plans.

6. Descriptions of procedures to review the strategy at intervals not to exceed 10 years.

This element is addressed in the Introduction to the California Wildlife Action Plan. The California Department of Fish and Game will establish a Conservation Strategy Special Project Team to monitor and facilitate the implementation of conservation actions recommended in this Plan.

7. Description of the plans for coordinating, to the extent feasible, the development, implementation, review, and revision of the strategy with federal, state, and local agencies and Indian tribes that manage significant land and water areas within the state or administer programs that significantly affect the conservation of identified species and habitats.

This element is addressed in the Introduction to the California Wildlife Action Plan and in Appendix B. The Conservation Strategy Special Project Team, mentioned above, will also coordinate efforts with other agencies and partners to develop updates and revisions to the California Strategy in the years ahead. Coordinating implementation of the California Strategy and revisions to the strategy will involve meetings and workshops with involved agencies and partners.

8. Description of the necessary public participation in the development, revision, and implementation of the strategy.

This element is addressed in Appendix B (Agency Coordination and Public Participation in Plan Development, Review, and Revision) of the California Wildlife Action Plan.

Most of the conservation actions recommended in this report, if implemented, would be reviewed further through well-established public participatory processes such as the California Fish and Game Commission review process, the State Water Resources Control Board hearing process, U.S. Forest Service or BLM resource management planning processes, county planning commission and board of supervisors review processes, or legislative hearings. Conservation actions would also comply with public review requirements pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act and the National Environmental Protection Act.